



SPRING 1999 RELEASE ITEM

Grade 8 Social Studies

How do students provide evidence of what they know and can do in social studies?

SAMPLE OPEN-RESPONSE QUESTION

The following is an example of an open-response question designed to provide an opportunity for students to show what they know and can do in the area of social studies:

Uniforms

Many public schools are debating whether students should be required to wear uniforms.

- Discuss **two pros** and **two cons** of requiring school uniforms.
- Explain how requiring school uniforms relates to students' First Amendment rights.

What is the relationship of the assessment to the curriculum?

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

The content of the open-response question "Uniforms" addresses Social Studies Academic Expectation 2.14: "Students understand the democratic principles of justice, equality, responsibility, and freedom and apply them to real-life situations."

This question provides a way for students to show their understanding of several concepts from the *Core Content for Social Studies Assessment*. It gives students an opportunity to reflect on one of the most fundamental roles of a democratic government—the making and enforcing of laws to protect the rights, liberty, and property of its citizens. It asks students to consider the relationship between the basic rights of citizens guaranteed by the Constitution and a rule that would restrict certain freedoms in order to promote social order. Finally, it allows students to show how the Constitution can be applied to situations and issues that could not have been imagined by the Founding Fathers.

How good is good enough?

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

An appropriate student response should provide evidence of the student's understanding of the importance of both rules and rights in a democratic society.

For example, an appropriate response to this question would show that the student can

- identify and clearly discuss sound arguments both for and against a rule requiring school uniforms; and
- relate the First Amendment's guarantee of freedom of expression to the issue of compulsory school uniforms.

Successful student work should provide convincing evidence that the student can use social studies knowledge to address the relevant issue(s), although the response may not address all details and may contain some flaws.



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APPLICATIONS

How is this relevant?

This question addresses the important issue of how a democratic government can promote an orderly society while protecting the rights of individual citizens. By successfully answering this question, students demonstrate an understanding of the tension between rules and rights and between order and freedom in a democratic society. Students need this understanding to appreciate the importance of both rules and rights in maintaining a free society.



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The following is an example of an open-response question designed to provide an opportunity for students to show what they know and can do in the area of social studies:

Scales of Justice

Use the illustration below to answer the question.



“Lady Justice” is a symbol of the United States justice system. As shown in the illustration above, she wears a blindfold and carries a balance scale. Explain how this symbol represents **two** characteristics of the U.S. justice system.



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SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

What is the relationship of the assessment to the curriculum?

The content of the open-response question “Scales of Justice” addresses Social Studies Academic Expectation 2.15: “Students can accurately describe various forms of government and analyze issues that relate to the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a democracy.”

This question provides a way for students to show their understanding of several concepts from the *Core Content for Social Studies Assessment*. It asks students to consider the basic principles that underlie the American justice system. To do this, students must demonstrate an understanding of the role of the judicial branch of government, the Constitutional rights of citizens, and the fundamental belief in the equality of all citizens as stated in the Declaration of Independence.

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

How good is good enough?

An appropriate student response should provide evidence of the student’s understanding of the basic principles of the U.S. justice system.

For example, an appropriate response to this question would show that the student can

- clearly understand the concept of justice;
- clearly understand the symbolic meaning of the blindfold and scales in the image of “Lady Justice”; and
- accurately explain how the symbolism of “Lady Justice” represents two characteristics of the U.S. justice system.

Successful student work should provide convincing evidence that the student can use social studies knowledge to address the relevant issue(s), although the response may not address all details and may contain some flaws.

APPLICATIONS

How is this relevant?

The question addresses our country’s most important legal principle, so important that it is carved in stone over the entrance to the United States Supreme Court: “Equal Justice Under Law.” By successfully answering this question, students demonstrate an understanding that all Americans have a right to fair and impartial treatment by the U.S. justice system. Students need this understanding to operate in and to evaluate the performance of the justice system, whether as a law enforcement professional, a juror, a defendant in a judicial proceeding, or a concerned citizen.



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The following is an example of an open-response question designed to provide an opportunity for students to show what they know and can do in the area of social studies:

Cities

Use the map below to answer the question.



In the United States, the growth and development of any city may depend on a variety of factors.

- Select a city shown on the United States map above.
- Choose **two** factors in city growth from the list below and explain why each factor was important to the growth and development of the city you chose in **part a**.

Factors in City Growth

- Physical resources (such as local plants, animals, minerals, water supply, soil quality)
- Human resources (such as local population, culture, skills, education)
- Location (such as access to trade routes, transportation, recreation areas)
- Climate (such as growing season, precipitation, natural disasters)



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SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

What is the relationship of the assessment to the curriculum?

The content of the open-response question “Cities” addresses Social Studies Academic Expectation 2.19: “Students recognize and understand the relationship between people and geography and apply their knowledge in real-life situations.”

This question provides a way for students to show their understanding of several concepts from the *Core Content for Social Studies Assessment*. Students are asked to demonstrate an understanding that different factors affect both the location of human activities and the growth and development of those activities in that location. Students may also demonstrate an understanding that geographical places have distinct characteristics (human and physical) and that these places may change over time as a result of diverse factors (e.g., historical, technological, social).

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

How good is good enough?

An appropriate student response should provide evidence of the student’s understanding of the geographical and human factors that affect the growth and development of large urban areas.

For example, an appropriate response to this question would show that the student can

- explain how each of two factors has affected the growth and development of one major American city; and
- support this explanation with specific facts about that city that are relevant to the city’s growth and development over time.

Successful student work should provide convincing evidence that the student can use social studies knowledge to address the relevant issue(s), although the response may not address all details and may contain some flaws.

APPLICATIONS

How is this relevant?

The question addresses the complex relationship between geography and people in settlement and land use patterns. By successfully answering this question, students demonstrate an understanding of the many factors that affect the growth and development of large urban areas. Students will need this understanding as they begin to make decisions about where to seek employment, buy a home, locate a business, or retire. They will also need this understanding to participate effectively in public debates on such issues as land use, zoning, transportation, urban development, and the preservation of open space.



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The following is an example of an open-response question designed to provide an opportunity for students to show what they know and can do in the area of social studies:

Differences

Social, economic, and cultural differences developed between the North and South in the early 1800s.

- Describe **two** differences between the North and South in this period.
- Explain how these differences led to the Civil War.

What is the relationship of the assessment to the curriculum?

SOCIAL STUDIES CONTENT

The content of the open-response question “Differences” addresses Social Studies Academic Expectation 2.20: “Students understand, analyze, and interpret historical events, conditions, trends, and issues to develop historical perspective.”

This question provides a way for students to show their understanding of several concepts from the *Core Content for Social Studies Assessment*. Specifically, the question offers students an opportunity to analyze the roots of a pivotal event in American history—the Civil War. Students are asked to show understanding of some of the social, economic, and/or cultural differences between the northern and southern sections of the United States that resulted in the Civil War. As students explain these differences, they may address the concepts of slavery, tariffs, industrialism vs. agrarianism, union vs. states’ rights, and the Emancipation Proclamation.

How good is good enough?

PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

An appropriate student response should provide evidence of the student’s understanding of the long-term causes of the Civil War.

For example, an appropriate response to this question would show that the student can

- identify and describe two social, economic, and/or cultural differences between the North and South that existed in the early 1800s; and
- explain how these differences resulted in the Civil War.

Successful student work should provide convincing evidence that the student can use social studies knowledge to address the relevant issue(s), although the response may not address all details and may contain some flaws.



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APPLICATIONS

How is this relevant?

The question addresses the important question of what caused the American Civil War. By successfully answering this question, students demonstrate an understanding of how regions can develop differently and how these differences can lead to conflict. Students can use this knowledge to help them understand and appreciate regional differences in the United States today, as well as to analyze the origins of regional conflicts and civil wars in other parts of the world.